

REVIVED APPLICATION IN THE CASE OF THE NAMES FOR
SOUTH AMERICAN RODENTS PUBLISHED BY BRANTS
(1827). Z.N.(S.) 1775.

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In December 1966 (*Bull. zool. Nom.* vol. 23: 243-4) I applied for the names for South American rodents published by Brants in 1827 to be placed on the Official Indexes of Rejected and Invalid Names in Zoology. No action has yet been taken by the Commission on that application, which I now renew.

2. Felix de Azara published a well-known work on the mammals of Paraguay in 1801 in a French edition, and in 1802 in a Spanish edition - *Apuntamientos para la historia natural de los cuadrupedos del Paraguay y Rio de la Plata* (Madrid). He described three new species of cricetid mice under vernacular names - *agreste*, *blanco-debaxo* and *colibreve* - in the Spanish, but not in the French edition.

3. Desmarest (1819, *Nouveau dictionnaire d'histoire naturelle*, vol. 29) gave linnean binominal names to the species described in the French edition, and these have been generally used ever since. They were used, for example, by Brants (1827, *Het Geslacht der Muizen door Linnaeus opgesteld . . .*) (Berlin), who saw that no scientific names had then been given to the three species first described in the Spanish edition. He therefore cited a genus "*Ratton* d'Azara", although Azara had used only the vernacular plural "*Ratones*", and placed in it as species the forms given one-word vernacular names by Azara, treating the names as Latin. In fact, he described in all five species in the genus *Ratton*, as

| Brants, 1827 | Azara, 1802 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Ratton agreste</i> (: 184) | el <i>agreste</i> (: 94) |
| <i>Ratton blanco debaxo</i> (: 185) | el <i>blanco debaxo</i> (: 97) |
| <i>Ratton colibreve</i> (: 186) | el <i>colibreve</i> (: 86) |
| <i>Ratton espinoso</i> (: 186) | el <i>espinoso</i> (: 76) |
| <i>Ratton tucotuco</i> (: 187) | el <i>tucotuco</i> (: 69) |

The last two species are not cricetids. It is necessary to examine the status of each of these names.

4. Brants used *Ratton* in exactly the same way as other generic names like *Mus* and *Spalax* and there seems no doubt that it is an available name (it is listed by Neave, though not by Sherborn).

It has, however, never been adopted by later authors, and the species put in it by Brants form a very heterogeneous collection. It is therefore a subjective synonym of several generic names in current use, mostly junior to it. It can be disposed of either by suppression under the plenary powers, or by designating a type-species that would make it a junior synonym of an earlier name (no type-species designation for *Ratton* is known). The latter course, however, presents problems of its own.

5. *R. tucotuco* belongs to the genus *Ctenomys* Blainville, 1826 (the other species are now placed in *Eurizygomatomys* Goeldi, 1901, *Akodon* Meyen, 1833 and *Calomys* Waterhouse, 1837). It would thus be easy to make *Ratton* Brants, 1827 a junior subjective synonym of *Ctenomys* Blainville, 1826 by designating *R. tucotuco* as its type-species. This would, however, imply that the specific name *tucotuco* is a valid name. Unfortunately, Azara's description is enough only to recognise that it is a *Ctenomys*. It is not enough to distinguish a species within the genus. Langguth & Abella (1970, *Commun. zool. Mus. Hist. nat. Montevideo*, vol. 10, No. 129) showed how subtle are the changes in morphology within and between populations and species of this genus over short geographical distances. Oldfield Thomas (1896, *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (6) vol. 18: 311), in describing *C. perrensi*, thought that it might be Azara's tucotuco "but that animal has never had a distinctive name applied to it, owing to its identification with the Minas Geraes form, *Ctenomys brasiliensis* de Blainville" 1826; but in 1903 (*Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (7) vol. 11: 228) he thought that his new species *C. azarae* might be the tucotuco (later that year, *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (7) vol. 12: 243, he corrected the type-locality of *C. azarae*). All of these species are thus candidates to represent Azara's tucotuco, but it is quite impossible to say which one does so in reality. For this reason - that the only type-species designation which would make *Ratton* a junior synonym involves a nomen dubium - it is thought preferable to ask for the suppression of that generic name. To designate a suitable neotype for *R. tucotuco* in connection with revisory work would be a long and difficult task and would create rather than solve a taxonomic problem.

6. Regarding the five specific names combined by Brants with *Ratton*, it is my present submission that these are not available names under the provisions of the Code because all are vernacular names. This seems obviously the case with *blanco debaxo*, *espinoso* and *tucotuco*; but even if accepted as Latin or latinised or treated as such, none is in either the nominative or the genitive case. The word *colibreve* is of obscure origin, but is not found in Latin dictionaries.

It is true that *agreste* corresponds to the neuter nominative singular of the Latin adjective *agrestis*, but it is equally a Spanish vernacular word. Moreover, there seems no reason to discriminate between these names, and every reason to treat them all in the same way.

7. If the Commission prefers to regard all the names as available, it is then necessary to consider the effect of that decision on other names.

(a) *R. agreste*. This was renamed *Mus? azarae* by J.B. Fischer, 1829, *Synopsis Mammalium*: 325. That name has been used ever since except for one author on one occasion (Herskovitz, 1966, *Zeitschr. Säug.* vol. 31: 106). It is therefore impossible to apply the provision of Articles 23a-b and 79b to it, but it is clearly in the interests of stability that *R. agreste* should be suppressed.

(b) *R. blanco debaxo*. This name, if not treated as a vernacular name, is not binominal and is thus unavailable for that reason. Its taxonomic status is doubtful. *Mus? dubius* J.B. Fischer, 1829: 326, is a replacement name for it, but according to Langguth (1975, *Papeis Avulsos Zool. S. Paulo* vol. 28(8): 46) it is now generally thought to be *Calomys laucha* (G. Fischer, 1814). I have been unable to find as many as ten recent references to this species. However, though it is clearly a less important case than the others, it is difficult to see what would be gained by making an exception in favour of *R. blanco debaxo*.

(c) *R. colibreve*. No replacement name has ever been proposed for this name, nor has it ever been used as a valid name. Tate (1932, *Amer. Mus. Nov.* No. 557: 4) thought that *Akodon obscurus* (Waterhouse, 1837) was probably the same, and this opinion was shared by Devincenzi (1935, *An. Mus. Hist. nat. Montevideo* (2) vol. 4, No. 10: 59). A list of uses of this name for topotypes and other specimens of *R. colibreve* is given in the Appendix to this paper.

(d) *R. espinoso*. In this case Azara's *espinoso* had already been named *Rattus spinosus* G. Fischer, 1814, so that Brants' name, even if available, is invalid as a junior objective synonym. It has, moreover, never been used.

(e) *R. tucotuco*. As shown in paragraph 5, this is a nomen dubium. Any attempt to introduce it into use would almost certainly disturb stability so that, if it is regarded as available, it should be suppressed.

8. For the reasons advanced in this application, the Commission is asked to take the following action:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

and then to take one of the following courses:

either A

- (2) to declare that the specific names *agreste*, *blanco debaxo*, *colibreve*, *espinoso* and *tucotuco* Brants, 1827, as published in combination with the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827 are vernacular names and, as such, are not available for use in zoological nomenclature;

or B

- (3) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific names *agreste*, *blanco debaxo*, *colibreve* and *tucotuco* Brants, 1827, as published in combination with the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
- (4) to place the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827, as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology;

either A

- (5) to place the specific names *agreste*, *blanco debaxo*, *colibreve*, *espinoso* and *tucotuco* Brants, 1827, as published in combination with the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology as unavailable vernacular names;

or B

- (6) to place the specific names *agreste*, *blanco debaxo*, *colibreve* and *tucotuco* Brants, 1827, as published in combination with the generic name *Ratton* Brants, 1827, and as suppressed under the plenary powers in (3) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology;
- (7) to place the specific name *espinoso* Brants, 1827, as published in the binomen *Ratton espinoso*, a junior objective synonym of *Rattus spinosus* G. Fischer, 1814, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

APPENDIX

Usage of junior synonyms of *R. agreste* Brants, 1827

Akodon azarae (Fischer 1829). Sierra de Soriano, B., 1969. Algunos caracteres externos de cricetinos y su relación con el grado de adaptación a la vida acuática. *Physis*, vol. 28(77): 471-486.

Akodon azarae azarae (Fischer). Barlow, J.C., 1969. Observations on the biology of Rodents in Uruguay. *Life Sci. Contr. R. Ont. Mus.* No. 75: 1-59.

- Akodon azarae*. Pearson, O.P., 1967. La estructura por edades y la dinámica reproductiva en una población de ratones de campo, *Akodon azarae*. *Physis*, vol. 27 (74) : 53–58.
- Akodon azarae*. Bianchi, N.O., Reig, O.A., Molina, O.J. & Dulout, F.N., 1971. Cytogenetics of the South American akodont rodents (Cricetidae). I. A progress report of Argentinian and Venezuelan forms. *Evolution*, vol. 25(4): 724–736.
- Akodon azarae*. Reig, O.A., 1964. Roedores y Marsupiales del partido de General Pueyrredón y regiones adyacentes. *Publ. Mus. Mun. Cien. Nat. Mar del Plata*, vol. 1(6): 203–224.
- Akodon arenicola* (Waterhouse). Sanborn, C.C., 1929. The land mammals of Uruguay. *Publ. Field Mus. Nat. Hist. Zool. Ser.* vol. 17(4): 147–165.
- Akodon azarae azarae*. Fornes, A. Massoia, E., 1965. Micromamíferos recolectados en la localidad bonaerense de Miramar. *Physis*, vol. 25(69): 99–108.
- Akodon azarae*. Crespo, J.A., Sabattini, M.S., Piantanida, M.J. & de Villa-fane, G., 1970. Estudios ecológicos sobre roedores silvestres. 45 pp. *Comision Nac. estudio y lucha fiebre hemorrágica Argentina*, Buenos Aires.
- Akodon (Akodon) azarae azarae* (Fischer). Ximenez, A., Langguth, A., Praderi, R., 1972. Lista sistemática de los mamíferos del Uruguay. *Anal. Mus. Nac. Hist. Nat. Montevideo*, Ser. 2, vol. 7(5): 1–49.
- Akodon azarae* (Fischer). Langguth, A., 1965. Contribución al conocimiento de los Cricetinae del Uruguay. *Anais 2do. Congr. Latinoamericano de Zoología*, vol. 2: 327–335.
- Akodon azarae*. Crespo, J.A., 1966. Ecología de una comunidad de roedores silvestres en el Partido de Rojas, provincia de Buenos Aires. *Rev. Mus. Arg. Cien. Nat. Bs. As. Ecología*, vol. 1(3): 79–134.
- Usage of junior synonyms of *R. blanco debaxo* Brants, 1827
- Hesperomys dubius* (Fischer). Tate, G.H.H., 1932. The South American Cricetidae described by Félix Azara. *Amer. Mus. Novitates* No. 557: 1–5.
- Mus* [?] *dubius* Fischer - Hershkovitz, P., 1962. Evolution of Neotropical Cricetine rodents (Muridae) with special reference to the Phyllotine group. *Fieldiana Zool.*, vol. 1–524.
- Calomys dubius dubius* (Fischer). Cabrera, A., 1961. Catálogo de los mamíferos de América del Sur, II. *Rev. Mus. Arg. Cien. Nat. Bs. As.*, vol. 4(2): 309–732.
- Calomys dubius*. Massoia, E. & Fornes, A., 1965. Contribución al conocimiento de los roedores miomorfos argentinos vinculados con la fiebre hemorrágica argentina. *Comision Nac. Coord. Estudio y Lucha Fiebre Hemorrágica Argentina*. 20 pp. (*Calomys dubius* (Fischer) is a synonym of *Calomys laucha*).
- Calomys dubius dubius*. Massoia, E., Fornes, A., Wainberg, R. & Fronza, T.G., 1968. Nuevos aportes al conocimiento de las especies bonaerenses del genero *Calomys*. *Rev. Invest. Agropecuarias INTA Bs. As.* Ser. 1, vol. 5(4): 63–92. (*Calomys dubius dubius* used as a junior synonym of *Calomys laucha laucha*).

Calomys dubius. Langguth, A., 1975. La identidad de *Mus lasiotis* Lund y el status del genero *Thalpomys* Thomas (Mammalia, Cricetidae). *Papeis Avulsos Zool. S. Paulo*, vol. 29(8): 45-54. (*Calomys dubius* (Fischer) is a junior subjective synonym of *Calomys laucha* (Fischer) 1814).

Usage of junior synonyms of *R. colibreve* Brants, 1827

- Akodon obscurus* (Waterhouse). Tate, G.H.H., 1932. The South American Cricetidae described by Felix Azara. *Amer. Mus. Novitates*, No. 557: 1-5.
- Akodon obscurus*. Hooper, E.T. & Musser, G.G., 1964. The glans penis in Neotropical cricetines (Family Muridae) with comments on classification of muroid rodents. *Misc. Publ. Mus. Zool. Univ. Michigan* No. 123: 1-57.
- Akodon obscurus* (Waterhouse). Sanborn, C.C., 1929. The Land Mammals of Uruguay. *Publ. Field Mus. Nat. Hist. Zool. Ser.*, vol. 17(4): 147-165.
- Akodon obscurus* (Waterhouse). Hershkovitz, P., 1962. Evolution of Neotropical cricetine rodents (Muridae) with special reference to the phyllotine group. *Fieldiana Zool.*, vol. 46: 1-524.
- Akodon obscurus* (Waterhouse). Vaz-Ferreira, Raúl, 1960. Nota sobre cricetinae del Uruguay. *Arch. Soc. Biol. Montevideo*, vol. 24: 66-75.
- Zygodontomys obscurus* (Waterhouse). Reig, O.A., 1964. Roedores y Marsupiales del partido de General Pueyrredon y regiones adyacentes. *Publ. Mus. Munic. Cien. Nat. Mar del Plata*, vol. 1(6): 203-224.
- Akodon obscurus obscurus* (Waterhouse). Fornes, A. & Massoia, E., 1965. Micromamíferos (Marsupialia y Rodentia) recolectados en la localidad bonaerense de Miramar. *Physis*, vol. 25(69): 99-108.
- Akodon (Cabreramys) obscurus* (Waterhouse). Ximenez, A., Langguth, A., & Praderi, R., 1972. Lista sistemática de los mamíferos del Uruguay. *Anal. Mus. Nac. Hist. Nat. Montevideo*, Ser. 2, vol. 7(5): 1-49.
- Akodon obscurus obscurus* (Waterhouse). Cabrera, A., 1961. Catálogo de los mamíferos de América del Sur, II. *Rev. Mus. Arg. Cien. Nat. Bs. As. Zool.*, vol. 4(2): 309-732.
- Cabreramys obscurus* (Waterhouse). Massoia, E. & Fornes, A., 1967. El estado sistemático, distribución geográfica y datos etoecológicos de algunos mamíferos neotropicales (Marsupialia y Rodentia) con la descripción de *Cabreramys*, Género nuevo (Cricetidae). *Acta Zool. Lilloana*, vol. 23: 407-430.